

Precious Lives

By: Pamela Blodgett

As I look out on this audience, I see only one thing. Precious lives. Each one of you touched by brain disease so dramatic that your families have been wrung out by it, turned upside down, inside out and backwards. Mental illness is one of those equal opportunity experiences.

My job is to make brain maps that diagnose and guide treatment of neurological functioning and brain disease or mental illness.

Dr. Murphy's bill highlights what all of us working in mental health know, we need better mousetraps. We need research in evidence-based practices, we need HIPPA laws that support families to get treatment, and we need family courts. We need training for our law enforcement officers to recognize and diffuse violent situations. We need Congressional oversight that allows those of us wanting to help families, not be tied into laws that deny appropriate medication and treatment for our clients.

When I heard about Murphy's bill my inner words were: It's about time. Someone who works with the mentally ill has proposed something so full of common sense in the real world of mental health, surely it will pass easily in the house and the Senate quickly. But I'm no fool; I know this is going to take a national movement clamoring for change. That is why you and I are here today.

What brought me here? 5 years ago in May my dear friend and amazing colleague Dr. Kevin Bettencourt treated 19 patients on Friday, May 29th. Saturday morning, in an impulsive psychotic state, with his medication script left in the rear seat of his car, he hung himself from his favorite tree, It was off of tree house that he built with his 11 year old son for whom he was a baseball coach and loved to hike and fish.

I can say confidently to you all today that the research that this bill supports holds promise for all of us in this room. Schizophrenia, psychosis and help for the most vulnerable among us.

Together we can bring HR 3717 to law so that we can restore hope to those who have none. Sanity to our mental health and court systems, education to our officers, and hope to families of loved ones with serious mental illness.

This is the power and the hope that HR 3717 holds for all of us gathered in this room today, and for each family of our nation so much like our own.

Let's join together to make this bill a law so that others who've not yet known our darkness do not share our fates. And though our walking, we can feel our power return. And we can inspire hope for our nation and its people who cower in fear of mental illness each day. Let's begin today.

Thank you.